DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 327 506 SP 032 815

AUTHOR Richardson, Gloria; Benton, Gary J.
TITLE A Survey of Attitudes toward Staff Development.
PUB DATE Nov 90
NOTE 29p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Mid-South Educational Research Association (New Orleans, LA, November 13-16, 1990).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Tests/Evaluation Instruments (160)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Attitude Measures; Elementary School Teachers; Elementary Secondary Education; Likert Scales; Measurement Techniques; *Questionnaires; *Research Methodology; *Staff Development; *Teacher Attitudes

ABSTRACT

Staff development is a widely practiced effort to ensure quality education for students; however, at present, no validated instrument exists for the purpose of measuring attitudes toward staff development. In an attempt to construct an instrument for measuring the attitudes of faculty, administrators, and staff members toward their staff development programs, a 44-item survey was administered to 64 respondents during May 1990. The sample was drawn from the school districts participating in the East Mississippi Center for Educational Development, a 21-district effort to meet educational reform requirements and improve teaching. The Cronbach alpha coefficient was .6954. The standardized-item alpha was .7367. As a result of this analysis, it was determined that the instrument was a reliable measure of staff development attitudes. Analysis of variance completed the comparisons for demographics: age, gender, level, experience, and position. Further research utilizing this instrument is presently underway. (Author/JD)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED327506

A Survey of Attitudes Toward Staff Development

Gloria Richardson and Gary J. Benton
Mississippi State University

A paper presented at the Annual Meeting of
Mid-South Educational Research Association
New Orleans, LA
November 13-16, 1990

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
G. Richardson
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

Running Head: S. D. ATTITUDES

SP032815

"A Survey of Attitudes Toward Staff Development"

Dr. Gloria Richardson, Adjunct Faculty,
Mississippi State University-Meridian and
Dr. Gary Benton, Education Chairman,
Mississippi State University-Meridian

Staff development is a widely practiced effort to insure quality education for students in most states. Offerings vary widely and teachers frequently voice both negative and positive opinions of the quality of their experiences in staff development. At present no validated instrument exists for the purpose of measuring attitudes toward staff development.

This study illustrated an effort to construct an instrument to measure the attitudes of faculty, administrators, and staff members toward their staff development programs. The 44-item survey was administered to 64 respondents during May, 1990. The population was the school districts participating in the East Mississippi Center for Educational Development, a 21-district effort to meet educational reform requirements and to improve teaching.

The Cronbach alpha coefficient was .6954. The standardized-item alpha was .7367. As a result of this analysis, it was determined that the instrument was a reliable measure of staff development attitudes. Analysis of variance completed the comparisons for demographics: age, gender, level, experience, and position.

Further research utilizing this instrument is presently underway.

"A Survey of Attitudes Toward Staff Development"

Dr. Gloria Richardson, Adjunct Faculty,
Mississippi State University-Meridian and
Dr. Gary Benton, Education Chairman,
Mississippi State University-Meridian

INTRODUCTION

Staff development is a widely practiced effort to insure quality education for students in most states. Offerings vary widely, and teachers frequently voice both positive and negative opinions of their experiences in staff development. At present no validated instrument exists for the purpose of measuring attitudes toward staff development.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Staff Development

According to Strong, and others (1990) there has been a knowledge explosion in education during the past twenty years which has generated a number of programs and ideas for instructional improvement. This required school systems to make crucial decisions regarding staff development. It has become obvious that change

in our approach to this aspect of instructional improvement must be considered; however, it is necessary to change more than the content of staff development. An initial change would be to eliminate the destructive label training from staff development programs. Another important consideration would be the recognition that most experienced teachers know far more about the realities of teaching than do staff developers.

Joyce, Showers and Bennett (1987) considered the necessity of designirg staff development programs to increase student learning and aptitude to learn. Sustained change in curriculum and instruction depends upon an understanding of what kinds of learning and how much learning can be expected as the result of the effective utilization of materials learned through a well-planned staff development design which offers a broadened range of teaching models and curricular practices. Showers, Joyce and Bennett (1987) further stated that research relevant to staff development has been a recent phenomenon, "During the last ten years the amount of research has continued to increase and

the results have been integrated with studies of curriculum and innovation to enlarge the knowledge base substantially" (p. 78). The authors separated research data from non-research literature. In the non-research literature, emergent issues were site of training, who offers the most effective service, and motivation, governance, voluntariness, and timing. Variables considered in a research meta-analysis by Showers, Joyce and Bennett (1987) were: teacher characteristics, characteristics of schools and school systems, staff development programs, and student characteristics.

Highlights of Showers, Joyce and Bennett's (1987) meta-analysis of nearly 200 research studies and review of literature on staff development were as follows:

> What the teacher thinks about teaching determines what the teacher does when teaching. In training teachers, therefore, we must provide more than "going through the motions" of teaching.
>
> Almost all teachers can take useful information back to their classrooms when training includes four parts: (1) presentation of theory,

(2) demonstration of the new strategy, (3) initial practice in the workshop, and (4) prompt feedback about their efforts.

Teachers are likely to keep and use new strategies and concepts if they receive coaching (either expert or peer) while they are trying the new ideas in their classrooms.

Competent teachers with high self-esteem usually benefit more from training than their less competent, less confident colleagues.

Flexibility in thinking helps teachers learn new skills and incorporate them into their repertoires of tried and true methods.

Individual teaching styles and value orientations do not often affect teachers' abilities to learn from staff development.

A basic level of knowledge or skill in a new approach is necessary before teachers can "buy in" to it.

Initial enthusiasm for training is reassuring to the organizers but has relatively little influence upon learning.

> It doesn't seem to matter where or when training is held, and it doesn't really matter what the role of the trainer is (administrator, teacher, or professor). What does matter is the training design.
>
> Similarly, the effects of training do not depend on whether teachers organize and direct the program, although social cohesion and shared understandings do facilitate teachers' willingness to try out new ideas (p. 79).

Showers, Joyce and Bennett (1987) concluded that it is a safe bet to: (a) involve teachers in all aspects of governance; (b) expect differential responses to any training option but have confidence in carefully selected substance and carefully designed training; (c) build strong organizational contexts to support training; (d) assume that role designation has little to do with competence as a trainer; and (e) worry little about where training is held or when, as long as all personnel are involved in the selection of time and places (pp. 83-84). Furthermore, Showers, Joyce and Bennett (1987) stated that the purpose of

staff development design is "to create the conditions under which sufficient levels of knowledge and skill are developed to sustain practice and to provide the conditions that support practice until executive control has been achieved and transfer has occurred" (p. 84). The authors indicated that providing staff development practice was intended to "generate the cognition that enable the practice to be selected and used appropriately and integratively" (p. 85). "Surveys of staff development practices confirm the complaints of teachers, principals, and central office personnel that only a small portion of programs combine the necessary components to develop skill or engender 'follow-up' that sustains practice to the point of transfer" (Showers, Joyce and Bennett, p. 86). Also, according to Showers, Joyce and Bennett (1987), the study of attitudes toward staff development training indicated that an increase in knowledge, skill, and transfer created more positive teacher attitudes toward training.

Dobson and Others (1980) reported that successful staff development programs were rooted in an attitude

pervading the entire district which included "a set of expectations about the role of teachers; their professional needs; and their responsibility for solving their own problems" (p. 5).

"The procedure for accountability of the schooling process has resulted in a mechanistic posture. As persons are viewed from an objective perspective they are treated as objects" (Dobson, p. 7). As a result of this attitude toward staff development, persons respond in a robot-like fashion, exchanging role behaviors to conform to a new set of role expectations with little personal change of attitude, values, and beliefs. "The procedure is based on the assumption that those in superordinate positions know more than do those in subordinate positions about what is going on" (Dobson, p. 10). Because of the assumptions made about staff development, teachers frequently view their teaching assignments as a job, based upon their feelings of powerlessness and the hopelessness experienced over years of teaching.

Despite the feelings of teachers toward staff development programs, the intent and purposes of such

programs are valuable since the emphasis is on developing better instructional opportunities for students. Support for teachers and administrators who seek to develop curricular and instructional improvements would, likewise, improve school climate and the quality of the experiences received by the students (Edelfelt, 1983).

In a report by the American Association of School Administrators, the editor (Brodinsky 1986) defined staff development as "any activity on the part of the individual, regardless of school district participation, that is intended to advance the individual's professional stature and performance on the job" (p. 5). Reasons given for the new emphasis on staff development were:

1. Demands on the Curriculum. Teachers need help to cope with and manage new subject matter.

2. Demographic Challenge. Teachers need help to understand the student of today and tomorrow... Inservice education can help teachers understand the out-of-school problems that trouble students and can suggest teaching styles to help these students.

3. Demands on Methodology. Teachers need help because their jobs make new demands on them; and because new research and new pedagogical knowledge offer new opportunities for better teaching and learning.

4. Job-related Pressures. Teachers need help because their undergraduate and graduate courses did not-and may never-cover a host of real-life, on-the-job problems.

"Historically, inservice education has consisted of actions done for or to the teachers. These approaches have often given staff development a bad name" (Brodinsky, p. 8). Educational reform generated a wave of renewed interest in staff development. In some states, Mississippi, for example, recertification was tied to an in-service program for the first time, making the in-service program a topic of dispute for many teachers and in many districts which had formerly developed a minimum level of staff development for their teachers. For those districts which had previously developed good programs, the problems were minute. In many less affluent districts, the existing

programs were, in some instances, merely pieces of paper to meet State Department of Education requirements. This left these districts in desperate circumstances, and the programs developed to meet the recertification requirements severely taxed resources and staff. Though efforts to alleviate these problems were initiated, many staff development programs still produced a variety of negative attitudes or opinions among teachers.

ATTITUDES

A variety of definitions exist for the word attitude. Some are inclusive; others center on a specific set of constructs for a discipline, psychology, for example. According to Allport (1935), "An attitude is a mental and neural state of readiness, organized through experience, exerting a directive or dynamic influence upon the individual's response to all objects and situations with which it is related" (p. 2). Triandis (1971) explained attitudes as defined by theorists as "an idea charged with emotion which predisposes a class of actions to a particular class of social situations" (p. 2). Triandis (1971) further

identified three components of attitude: cognitive, affective, and behavioral. Attitudes help people understand their world by enabling them to organize input from environment. It helps the individual to protect his or her self-esteem and to adjust to a complex world. Finally, attitudes enable a person to express his or her fundamental values (Triandis 1971). "Attitudes are inferred from what a person says about an attitude object, from the way he feels about it, and from the way he says he will behave toward it" (Triandis 1971, p. 4).

Thurstone (1967), who pioneered attitude measurement, stated, "The concept 'attitude'...denotes the sum total of a man's inclinations and feelings, prejudice or bias, preconceived notions, ideas, threats, and convictions about any specified topic" (p. 77). Thurstone (1967) further stated, "the measurement of attitudes expressed by a man's opinions does not necessarily mean the prediction of what he will do" (p. 78). When social scientists and others measure attitude, it is with the realization that several assumptions must be made. First, we must assume that

the person is telling the true attitude; secondly, attitudes are subject to change. Finally, we assume that expression of attitudes will always be difficult to interpret.

Attitude measurement is derived from a list of initial statements which cover, if possible, the whole range of attitudes. Thurstone's (1967) criteria for this list included:

1. The statements should be as brief as possible...

2. The statements should be such that they can be endorsed or rejected in accordance with their agreement or disagreement with the attitude of the reader...

3. Every statement should be such that acceptance or rejection of the statement does indicate something regarding the reader's attitude about the issue in question...

4. Double-barreled statements should be avoided except possibly as examples of neutrality when better neutral statements do not seem to be readily available...

5. One must insure that at least a fair majority of the statements really belong on the attitude variable that is to be measured (p. 84).

RATIONALE

With Thurstone's criteria in mind, it was determined that an original survey of staff development attitudes, which had been used with a prior sampling and had proved to lack internal consistency, was too limited to measure the attitude variable properly. A brainstorming session produced a list of 44 statements which was an expansion of the original 12. When the list was completed, it was examined for content validity, edited, and prepared for initial sampling to determine reliability. The Thurstone scale was used for this sampling since further analysis would be done after determination of reliability was established.

SAMPLE

The sample was drawn from a consortium for educational development which included more than 21 school districts in east central Mississippi. A total of 64 respondents were included in the analysis.

The respondents were predominantly elementary teachers from one district and a group that represented all levels but predominantly elementary, from several other districts combined.

Insert Table 1 Here

The number of years in teaching and administration are shown in Table 2.

Insert Table 2 Here

A study of this data revealed that most of the teachers were primarily in-service from 0-20 years. The condescriptive data for age categories are shown in Table 3.

Insert Table 3 Here

Predominant ages ranged for this group fell into 2 categories (25.0 and 45.3 respectively). 20.3 percent of the respondents were between 41-50 years of age.

7.8% were over 51 years of age. An examination of the condescriptive data revealed that most items received a positive response. Negative responses were indicated for Item 10: I have an opportunity to help determine staff development policies and practices at the state level (although it might be considered desirable by national staff development authorities). Mississippi teachers seldom have an opportunity to give input at this level. Thirty-one percent of the respondents felt that staff development took too much time, and 34 percent indicated that there was too much paperwork involved. Twenty-five to 26 percent indicated that their districts did not have adequate funding or resources. Seventy-nine percent responded negatively to the option of college classes for recertification; whereas, 43.8 percent would prefer more concentrated staff development activities. Seventy-six percent of the respondents indicated that their districts should provide more staff development options. Approximately 83 percent responded negatively to the idea of summer seminars to replace staff development. Ninety-three percent of respondents indicated that staff development

should be balanced between consultants and local presenters. The respondents reported that they knew and understood their districts staff development goals (89.1%) and the goals for the state (60.9%). Finally, 34.4 percent of the respondents reported that teachers in their district subverted staff development activities. Positive responses were found for almost all of the 44 items; however, it is possible that the use of a Likert scale would discriminate more effectively than the Thurstone scale.

The Cronbach alpha coefficient was .6954. The standardized-item alpha was .7367. According to Cohen, (1977) an alpha coefficient of .60 would be sufficient reliability for an attitude survey of this type. As a result of this analysis, it was determined that the instrument was a reliable measure of staff development attitudes.

Further research with this instrument is presently underway. Projected uses will be based on the Likert scale of one to five, with one being strongly disagree; two being disagree; three being undecided; four being agree; and five being strongly agree. Also, future

samplings will be larger according to the standards of the American Educational Research Association (1985). Because items deal with local school district and state staff development programs, there will be a factor analysis to pull these items together for further comparisons.

CONCLUSION

Staff development is one of the most readily available means for improving curriculum and instruction. With the recent emphasis on restructuring of the schools, we must consider the restructuring of staff development programs, as well. Staff development should be the vehicle which drives our teachers, students, and schools into the next century. It is a means of coping with the changing societal, educational, and technological issues and psychological and physiological changes which teachers face as we move with increasing impetus into the information age.

REFERENCES

Allport, G. W. (1935). Attitudes (found in C. Murchison, ed. Handbook of social psychology). Worcester, MA: Clark University Press, pp. 798-844.

American Education Research Association (1985). Standards for educational and psychological testing. Washington, D.C.: APA.

Brodinsky, B., ed. (1986). AASA Critical issues reports: Staff development: Problems and solutions. Arlington, VA: American Association of School Administrators.

Dobson, R., Dobson, J. and Kessinger, J. (1980). Staff development: A humanistic approach. Lanham, MD: University Press of America.

Joyce, B., Showers, B. and Bennett, C. (1987). Staff development and student learning: A synthesis of research on models of teaching. Educational Leadership, 45 (2), pp. 11-23.

Strong, R. W. and Others (1990). Thoughtful education: staff development for the 1990's. Educational Leadership, 47 (5), pp. 25-29.

Thurston, L. L. (1967). Attitudes can be measured (in Reading in attitude theory and measurement, ed. by M. Fishbein). New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc. pp. 77-89.

Triandis, H. C. (1971). Attitude and attitude change. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Table 1

Condescriptive Data Analysis, Frequency Data for

Responses Multi-personnel Attitude Survey of Staff Development

Variable	Frequency			Percentage		
	No Resp 0	Yes 1	No 2	No Resp 0	Yes 1	No 2
1. Provides variety of activities	0	62	2	0.0	96.9	3.1
2. Meets my professional development needs	0	58	6	0.0	90.6	9.4
3. Is relevant and meaningful	1	58	5	1.6	90.6	7.8
4. Provides qualified agents	0	64	0	0.0	100.0	0.0
5. Participation by teachers	0	61	3	0.0	95.3	4.7
6. Recertification should be tied to Staff Dev.	2	48	14	3.1	75.0	21.9
7. Become better administrator/ teacher as a result of S.D	1	52	11	1.6	81.3	17.2
8. Improved instruction in district .	1	53	10	1.6	82.8	15.6
9. Opportunity to determine policies and practices at district level	3	51	10	4.7	79.7	15.6

10	Opportunity to determine SD policies/practices at state level	30	21	40	4.7	32.8	62.5
11.	Teacher-learning environment in school improving due to S.D.	1	57	6	1.6	89.1	9.4
12.	Teacher-learning environment in district is improving due to S.D.	3	53	8	4.7	82.8	12.5
13.	Current approach to S.D. in district is successful	0	59	5	0.0	92.2	7.8
14.	Current approach to S.D. in state is successful	2	54	8	3.1	84.4	12.5
15.	S.D. requires too much time	0	20	44	0.0	31.3	68.8
16.	too much paperwork in S.D.	1	22	41	1.6	34.4	64.1
17.	S.D. should be used to make state/district improvement	2	61	1	3.1	95.3	1.6
18.	District has adequate funding	3	45	16	4.7	70.3	25.0
19.	Necessary resources	3	44	17	4.7	68.8	26.6

20. State should provide more resources	1	57	6	1.6	89.1	9.4
21. S.D. should provide more challenging/interesting activities	1	53	10	1.6	82.8	15.6
22. Prefer college classes for recertification	1	12	51	1.6	18.8	79.7
23. Prefer more concentrated S.D. activities	3	33	28	4.7	51.4	43.8
24. District should provide more options	0	49	15	0.0	76.6	23.4
25. Ed Reform requirements for S.D. have improved Ms Tea/Adm	2	54	8	3.1	84.4	12.5
26. S.D. directly impacts student learning	2	49	13	3.1	76.6	20.3
27. Summer seminars could replace S.D.	2	9	53	3.1	14.1	82.8
28. District routinely conducts needs assessment	4	55	5	6.3	85.9	7.8
29. Professional adm/t possess necessary expertise for S.D.	0	62	2	0	96.9	3.1
30. S.D. balanced between consultants and local presenters	0	60	4	0	93.8	6.3
31. My prof knowledge is up-to-date	0	55	9	0	85.9	14.1

32. St Dev Act properly scheduled, managed and recorded	1	59	4	1.6	92.2	6.3
33. I benefit professionally or personally	0	59	5	0	92.2	7.8
34. SD Program needs change/ improvement	2	18	44	3.1	28.1	68.8
35. Local district SD council responsible	8	51	5	12.5	79.7	7.8
36. All activities evaluated appropriately	2	54	8	3.1	84.4	12.5
37. SD based on needs assessment or Prof/Pers growth objectives	2	59	3	3.1	92.2	4.7
38. SD complies with State Dept. regulations	3	60	1	4.7	93.8	1.6
39. SD planned by Central Office personnel	5	39	20	7.8	60.9	31.3
40. Building Administrator/ CO administrator should be present at all SD	0	50	14	0	78.1	21.9
41. Facilities/equipment in district adequate	2	60	2	3.1	93.8	3.1
42. I know/understand SD goals for my district	0	57	7	0	89.1	10.9
43. I know/understand SD goals for my state	0	39	25	0	60.9	39.1
44. Teachers in district sometime subvert SD	7	22	35	10.9	34.4	54.7

Table 2

Condescriptive Data for years in teaching and administration.

Variable	No.	%	M
Group 1 (0-10)	26	40.6	52.1154
Group 2 (11-20)	27	42.2	53.7037
Group 3 (21-30)	6	9.4	50.3333
Group 4 (31 above)	4	6.3	52.2500
No response	1	1.6	0.0000
TOTAL	64	100.0	52.634*

(*M computed for only 63 respondents)

Table 3

Age Categories for Respondents to the

Multi-Personnel Attitude Survey of Staff Development.

Variable	No.	%
Group 1 (20-30)	16	25.0
Group 2 (31-40)	29	45.3
Group 3 (41-50)	13	20.3
Group 4 (51+)	5	7.8
No Response	1	1.6